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ART

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## AROUND THE GALLERIES

By HOLLY MYERS  
*Special to The Times*

### Caught between pigment, likeness

As pleasant as it can be to lose oneself in the experience of paint for paint's sake, freed from the bonds of representation, there is a special sort of thrill to that moment when, stepping back from a canvas, a seemingly chaotic mass of brushstrokes crystallizes suddenly into a crisp, recognizable image.

The tension between these two states — between pigment and likeness — pervades Belgian painter **Cindy Wright's** first exhibition at Mark Moore Gallery, her American debut. Stand at the center of the moderate-size gallery and the nine large paintings within view seem to flicker in and out of focus with a

few steps in one direction or another — from a loose swarm of colored daubs to something startlingly photographic and back again.

Enriching the effect is Wright's discomfiting choice of subjects and her careful attention to surfaces. Six of the 10 paintings in the show are portraits, most captured at uncomfortably close range. Of the remaining, one depicts the head of a presumably dead deer, lying on the ground; two are magnified views of red meat; and the last is a similarly magnified view of the skin of someone's palm.

The image on the invitation, which was sold before the opening and didn't make it into the show — unfortunate because, even in reproduction, it's unnervingly absorbing — depicts glistening strips of raw meat stacked neatly into a Richard Serra-like cube.

The juxtaposition of human skin, animal skin and meat is both alarming and seductive. The visual through-line is the light that bathes these surfaces, which Wright renders with consummate skill.

Particularly striking is a pairing on one wall of the palm piece with the blown-up view of a sleeping man's face floating horizontally against a glowing white ground. Both are illuminated by a strong, white light, and the effect of this light sliding across the skin animates the entire canvas.

**Mark Moore Gallery**, 2525 Michigan Ave., A-1, Santa Monica, (310) 453-3031, through March 25. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.markmooregallery.com](http://www.markmooregallery.com)